Reducing Alcohol Related Harm among Children and Young People
Methodology/ Introduction
• How we collected the information

Phase 1: Focus Groups
14 x Discussion Groups with 14 to 17 year olds (n = 72)

Phase 2: Online Survey
Online Survey of 14 to 17 year olds (n = 200)
Young people were asked about their views on a broad range of topics like:

- Alcohol in the Australian culture
- Standard drink guidelines
- Harms caused by alcohol
- Influences on young people drinking
- Strategies to reduce harm
• Demographics of participation

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<th>Gender</th>
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<th>Female</th>
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Many sections of society were represented - regardless of whether minority or majority

- Specific groups
- Range of views
Culture of Drinking
"It's all part of the culture... you see drinking at all the events, like footy games and races."

"You're the odd one out if you don't drink"

"Drinking is normal, see people drink at pubs, parks, houses"

"I reckon it's part of the culture like especially you can see it on Australia Day a lot - everyone gets smashed"

"Australia Day, Christmas celebrations"

"The problem is with the culture. Australian is beer in one hand"

"Yeah, drinking is just part of everyday life - nothing unusual about it"

"Every adult has drunk alcohol"
“If we have a family function, my parents would give me a drink or try.”

“If I steal it off my Dad”

“Ask random people (Outside the bottleshop) and give them money)”

“Everyone has older friends, you always get what you want”

“Brother and sister, she is older and always busy so that is cool”

“Even when I was 12 I was drinking at like Christmas”

“I can pass as 18, especially in the Kimberley...I can go to the pub by myself”

Alcohol Availability
“You have to say no over and over again.”

“I don’t want my parents seeing me drunk and losing respect for me.”

“I worry for others well being and safety”

“Its my choice in the end”

“Quiet nights in with the missus and stuff”

“Media portrays a certain image”

“Its just too risky – what’s the point?”

“We as young people shouldn’t be stereotyped”

“My parents are not big drinkers, so I am not really interested in alcohol”

“You have to come up with excuses”

Young people are not just one type of person
Non Drinkers!
“We all knows its illegal and we still drink.”

“They don’t have recommendations for under 18’s because they’re not supposed to drink”

“Eat bread to absorb the alcohol”

“They don’t have recommendations for under 18’s because they’re not supposed to drink”

“Some people can drink more or less, doesn’t it depend on your own capacity”

“It depends on how much of an alcoholic you are”

“You are having a good time so you keep drinking”

“Playing drinking games”

“I have no idea about what’s a standard drink”

“Did you say guidelines? Is there guidelines”

Understanding of Alcohol in young people
“Yeah, everyone thinks it's cool to drink”

“Cant have a good time without it”

“They (girls) go on Facebook and tell you I'm drunk”

“Girls drink for the brag factor, boys drink for the social factor”

“Everyone drinks, it's just a thing that happens”

“Drink until you pass out...or its all gone”

“Its just the done thing”

“It takes away from the problem”

“DRINKING to get drunk...isn’t that the whole point of drinking?”

“Most people just drink for fun”

Young people’s intentions with Alcohol
“Until you know its time to stop.”

“You don’t want to be that girl with her face in the garden”

“Your reputation being ruined”

“People don’t want to lose their license once they get it”

“I am mostly worried about the violence”

“If anything ever happened I would call my parents”

“I don’t remember anything”

“We didn’t know what to do, we were really scared”

“Getting locked up, getting into trouble...assault, street drinking”

“Main thing is fighting”
“If they did (drink alone) they have some sort of problem”

“Just for the fun of it”

“Everybody drinks, its just a thing that happens”

“Makes socialising easier”

“If we have a family function, my parents would give me a try.”

“The ones with the least confidence or the least social skills are the ones who go out and get plastered”

Drinking and socialising
Influences on Decisions about Alcohol
Friends

- Parents: Drinkers 37, Non-drinkers 57
- Friends: Drinkers 60, Non-drinkers 60
- Morals: Drinkers 11, Non-drinkers 32
- Health (e.g. any conditions, medication): Drinkers 12, Non-drinkers 24
- Campaigns (e.g. drink driving, drink...): Drinkers 9, Non-drinkers 24
- Sport Commitments: Drinkers 12, Non-drinkers 19
- Law: Drinkers 9, Non-drinkers 20
- School: Drinkers 13, Non-drinkers 16
- How easy/difficult to obtain: Drinkers 10, Non-drinkers 33
- Cost to obtain: Drinkers 12, Non-drinkers 22
- General Community: Drinkers 5, Non-drinkers 12
- Religion: Drinkers 2, Non-drinkers 7
- Alcohol promotion (e.g. TV ads, in store...): Drinkers 5, Non-drinkers 9
- Media (e.g. TV, movies, radio): Drinkers 4, Non-drinkers 5
- Other: Drinkers 6, Non-drinkers 12
Friends

• It’s the “Cool” thing to do

• Peer pressure/
  They don’t listen to “No”

• Social Activity

“You have to come up with excuses”
Female

“The drinking culture is to get smashed, not like everyone does, but it’s like the norm”
Female

“Can’t have a good time without it”
Female
Parents & Family

• Drinking becomes more polite when done with family members

• Older siblings are examples of ways to be supplied with alcohol

• Teens are encouraged by parents in some families

“Brother and sister, she is older and always buys alcohol so that is cool”

“My mum used to drink wine so that is what I used to drink”
### Activities

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<th>Activity</th>
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<td>Other Activities</td>
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Other Activities

Acceptable Excuses

• Sporting commitments
• School
• Extra-curricular activities

“Coach doesn’t like us drinking the day before the game.” Male

“I think whether someone has time to drink, like I mean like the people in your group that didn’t drink were people that were really into sport... And people that were really studious they just didn’t go out because of their studies.” Female
Accessibility

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- Other: Drinkers 12, Non-drinkers 6
Accessibility

- Alcohol is easy to obtain through purchase by parents or older siblings or friends
- Purchased underage without ID being requested

“If you can get it, you drink it.”

“‘If someone offers you something…. you’re not going to say no!’”

“If you served in bottle shops all the time- they never ask for ID.”
The majority of people did not understand standard drink policy
- It was confused with blood alcohol limits for driving

Little understanding that the guidelines were about safe and harmful levels of alcohol consumption
- Young people thought guidelines would depend on:
  - body type
  - gender

“I have no idea about what’s a standard drink.” male
“I really don’t know.” female
“Men are meant to have four standard drinks a week and women only two.” female
Knowledge about Alcohol-Related Harm

Young people could recite many harms that come from drinking alcohol...
Knowledge about Alcohol-Related Harm

...however the things they worried about the most were:

• violence
• drink driving
• damage to reputation
• looking after friends
• family conflict and violence
Strategies to Reduce the Harm from Alcohol
Strategies

- Alcohol free activities
- Support individual choice
- Effective education
- Legislative options
- Secondary supply
- Advertising and sponsorship
- Raising the drinking age
- Increasing the cost
Providing more alcohol free activities such as alcohol free music events, festivals, etc.

Stronger enforcement of the laws that prohibit the sale of alcohol to intoxicated people and to people under the age of 18

Education at school about the harms of alcohol (e.g., what the laws are, standard drinks, negative effects)

Restricting alcohol availability by reducing opening hours of licensed venues and bottle shops

Raising the drinking age from 18 to 19, 20 or 21. This means you cannot buy alcohol or drink on licensed premises until 20/21, but you could still drink on private premises with your parents’ consent
Alcohol Free Activities

- Bringing back culture and socialisation minus alcohol
- Knowing you had the best time of your life and being able to remember all of it.
- Encouraging alcohol free fun in teens

“Enjoying the festivities, the music and atmosphere, rather than listening from the toilet bowl in a port-a-potty”

“Provide alternative entertainment options that don’t involve alcohol”

“Can’t have a good time without it”
Better Education

Education at school about the harms of alcohol (e.g., what the laws are, standard drinks, negative effects)

- More effective education for young people, older siblings and parents
- Parents and siblings who supply alcohol need to be held responsible for the state they find their children and siblings in
Increasing and Enforcing Penalties

- All licenced venues and liquor stores must check IDs
- The government should closely monitor liquor stores

“Liquor stores need to take this problem and their role in it more seriously.”
Increasing the cost

Advantages

• Minimise the influence and limit that youth has on underage drinking as the following statistic shows:

“Almost 50% think that raising the cost of alcohol prices will be effective in limiting underage consumption.”

Disadvantages

• Not being able to afford it
• People with addictions end up with nothing.
• Honesty within the liquor outlets.
• Always find ways to get alcohol e.g.: Friends or Parents
Raising the Drinking Age

Raising the drinking age from 18 to 19, 20 or 21. This means you cannot buy alcohol or drink on licensed premises until 20/21, but you could still drink on private premises with your parents’ consent.

This statistic shows that more than 38% think that raising the drinking age will not be effective.

About one in three said that the strategy would be effective.
Raising the Drinking Age

Advantages
• Young people will be more mature when they start drinking
• It might raise the age at which people start drinking underage – i.e. 15/16 rather than 13/14 as it is now

Disadvantages
• There will be more underage people and therefore more people who could be drinking under age
• Mixed messages – you are considered an adult at 18 in every other respect except for drinking
Stop advertising on television.

**Advantages**
- It will reduce the exposure of alcohol to young people
- It will stop ‘glamorising’ alcohol
- It should stop impulsive purchases because people will not be reminded about alcohol

**Disadvantages**
- There will be a lot of money lost by organisations that rely on the money from alcohol advertising
- Drinking is legal and so long as it is, why shouldn’t it be advertised?

**Ban on alcohol advertising at sports and other events**
- 29
- 14
- 11
- 16
- 30

**Ban on alcohol companies sponsoring sports and other events**
- 32
- 14
- 11
- 16
- 28
More recognition for young people who don’t drink…

Not all young people drink and this should be acknowledged

More alcohol free activities where young people can socialise and interact without needing to boost their self-esteem with alcohol

Respect individual choice. It takes a lot of courage for young people to say no to alcohol and not succumb to peer pressure. Let them say no the first time.
Four points we would like to leave you with...
1. **Culture**: culture influences behaviour and the Australian culture is linked with alcohol.

2. **Education**: education needs to be improved and meaningful to be impactful.

3. **Diversity**: no strategy will work alone, there must be a diverse and strategic approach.

4. **Young people**: our voices must be heard in this debate.
This research was carried out by

Painted Dog Research

on behalf of the Commissioner for Children and Young People.